

Research Article

Translatability and Untranslatability in Hemingway's Literary Style

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Abstract

The quality of translation is influenced by the nature of the language and the clarity of the ideas within the translated fields. While the quality level increases in texts pertaining to abstract sciences (such as mathematics), experimental sciences (such as physics), and applied sciences (such as computer science), to the extent that human translation nearly matches machine translation and neural translation, a divergence begins to emerge among translations related to social sciences (like legal translation), theology (such as the translation of sacred texts), and the humanities (for instance, literary translation). This divergence highlights a significant issue in translation studies: the distinction between translatability and untranslatability. In this context, the present study examines the nuances of American novelist Ernest Hemingway's creative writing philosophy. It discusses the feasibility of translating his texts into languages that are quite distant from their original context, such as Arabic. Since Ernest Hemingway does not place much emphasis on content—given that his works are essentially autobiographies in novelistic form—this study concentrates on analysing the expressive form of this exceptional novelist, rightly regarded as the king of narrative language and the undisputed master of narrative style. The study traces Hemingway's straightforward language, comprehensible to readers of all ages, and his plain style, which embeds his attitudes towards his era. It concludes that any translation of Hemingway's works should aim to transpose the form of his works morphologically, stylistically, syntactically, and semantically, in order to merit the label of translation and bolster the arguments of those who advocate for translatability.

Keywords

Translation Studies, Ernest Hemingway, Literary Translation, Translatability, Untranslatability

1. Introduction

Very few scholars know that Ernest Hemingway was the first writer to have ever penned a story in six words, long before individual experience became recognised as a "genre" called a short-short story, a very short story, or a micro-story. Very few critics are aware that numerous twentieth-century

writers, including many Nobel Prize-winning authors, achieved fame and acclaim by emulating Ernest Hemingway's style. Similarly, few readers realise that style is all Hemingway has ever possessed. So, to what extent can Ernest Hemingway's style be translated?

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2. Hemingway, a Writer from Another Time

2.1. Hemingway as a Hunter, in the Prehistoric Sense of the Term

Hemingway's true personality is best revealed when compared to John Steinbeck, his rival and disciple simultaneously. Thus, "Steinbeck suggested to us that we can either husband our resources, maintain an intimate relationship with the Earth and its creatures, and learn to care for each other in time of need or perish in our blind egotisms, our selfish competitiveness, or our self-hatreds. Steinbeck, the farmer. Hemingway suggested that we must learn to master our environment, compete successfully in the arenas of society and nature, and have the courage to face alone the certain hardships that living entails, or our surroundings can victimise us, be forced to surrender our freedom and lose our identities, and be enslaved by our fears and illusions. Hemingway, the hunter." [1] Hemingway finds himself most at home on the battlefields, in wrestling challenges, and in hunting and fishing adventures.

2.2. Hemingway's Fiction as a Stylised Biography

As his characterisation clearly demonstrates, Ernest Hemingway's characters are based on firsthand experiences, and most represent Hemingway's generation and his post-World War society. Hemingway's characters value self-imposed discipline and self-control. To create authenticity and depth in his characters, Hemingway draws from genuine experiences with real places, events, and people. All his works reference his own experiences. In this way, Hemingway's writings bridge the divide between fiction and non-fiction. There is scarcely any boundary between fiction and non-fiction. Hemingway's works are often viewed as biographies centred around his personal experiences and individual adventures. Even the lessons drawn from his works reflect his personal views without further exploration. All these observations regarding the content of Hemingway's works align with the essence of biography writing, which is rich with real-life experiences, real people, real actions, and everyday language.

Today, Hemingway appears to be a writer from another era, often celebrated for his works and biographies that celebrate war and masculinity. One might wonder if he still possesses any relevance in terms of content. His attitude toward life now seems archaic. However, Hemingway continues to be referenced in high schools and universities, albeit less frequently than before. His works are now regarded more for their style than their content. Even those who didn't consider Hemingway a favourite cited his stripped-down approach, his intent to reinvent the language, and his commitment not to tell. These days, people do not view him as a writer with a social message as they once did, with the launch of publications such as "For

Whom the Bell Tolls," "To Have and Have Not," "The Fifth Column," and his 1937 Civil War dispatches to the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA) while he was in Spain covering the civil war, which belies the legend of a man consumed by himself, women, and drink.

3. Without Any Social Messages to Share, Style Is Hemingway's Strongest

3.1. Hemingway's Influence

In comparison to his disciples, Hemingway does not seem to possess a serious question to defend or a social conscience to share beyond his style. His widely acknowledged influence primarily lies in his stylistic contributions. Without Hemingway, we might never have Raymond Carver, Denis Johnson, Russell Banks, Tobias Wolff, James M. Cain, Albert Camus, or Jean-Paul Sartre. Perhaps the greatest value of Ernest Hemingway is found in what he has bequeathed to his generation and those to follow [2].

3.2. Hemingway's Influence on Between-the-wars American Writers

Of all the great American between-the-wars writers, "the Three Kings," as Richard Ford referred to Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, and Francis Scott Fitzgerald in a 1983 essay (although John Dos Passos can be included in their company), [3] Hemingway can be regarded as the most prominent and influential of the "Lost Generation" of expatriate writers who lived in Paris during the second decade of the twentieth century. He was famously known among writers of his time as "Papa Hemingway," since other writers willingly accepted him as their mentor.

Even his 1954 Nobel Prize speech alluded to the fatherly position he held among writers of his generation and beyond. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature "for his mastery of the art of narrative, most recently demonstrated in "The Old Man and the Sea," and for the influence that he has exerted on contemporary style." [4] John Steinbeck, the greatest American writer and regarded by Hemingway himself as a rival in his time, once confirmed:

"In my time, Ernest Hemingway wrote a certain kind of story better and more effectively than it had ever been done before. He was properly accepted and acclaimed. He was imitated almost slavishly by every young writer, including me, not only in America but in the world." [5]

Steinbeck even wrote it plainly in the manuscript of his novel, "East of Eden":

"He wrote a special kind of story out of a special kind of mind and about special moods and situations. When his method was accepted, no other method was admired. The method or style not only conditioned the stories but also the thinking of his generation. Superb as his method is, many

things cannot be said using it. The result of his acceptance was that writers did not write about those things which could not be said in the Hemingway manner, and gradually they did not think about them either." [6]

3.3. Hemingway's Influence on Between-the-wars French Writers

No other fiction writer had ever enjoyed such influence over his contemporaries. Hemingway did not have to wait long to embody the charismatic figure that his theory of writing, "The Iceberg Theory", essentially empowered him to become; nor did he have to wait centuries to witness the results of his hard work being embraced by heavyweight writers and Nobel Prize-winning fiction authors.

Ernest Hemingway's writing profoundly influenced not only the new generation of American writers but also their French counterparts in the 1930s, particularly Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. The latter recognised this stylistic connection, noting the possible influence of Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises" on Camus's first novel. [7] He elaborated on this point in a 1946 essay in "The Atlantic Monthly."

Sartre asserted that *L'Étranger* would never have been what it is had Albert Camus not read *The Sun Also Rises*. [8] This was corroborated by Wilfrid Sheed himself, who cleverly remarked that Albert Camus's first novel, *L'Étranger*, was the finest Hemingway novel that Camus wrote. [9] In an interview published in *Les Nouvelles littéraires* in 1945, Albert Camus admitted that he had adopted Hemingway's style while composing *L'Étranger* in 1942, intending to portray a man without apparent conscience: "un homme sans conscience apparente" [10].

4. "The Iceberg Theory", Hemingway's Philosophy of Fiction Writing

4.1. "The Iceberg Theory", a Revolution in Fiction Writing

"The Iceberg Theory," "the Iceberg Principle," or "Theory of Omission" are three labels that refer to Hemingway's theory of writing, which sparked a genuine stylistic revolution in the early decades of the twentieth century for fiction by closing the gap between writer and reader. This revolution compelled publishers to refrain from accepting manuscripts written in styles other than Hemingway's. Even John Steinbeck faced this new publishing strategy, yet he had to yield, as there was no other way to secure publication. It is a manner of writing that emphasises a clear, simple, and minimalist style, avoiding explicit descriptions of characters' feelings and refraining from verbal predictions of action outcomes.

The most important parts of the story are not conveyed verbally. They lie beneath the surface, much like the bulk of an iceberg, leaving only a small part visible above. The crit-

ical elements of the story remain unseen and implicit, much like the majority of an iceberg that is submerged. Hemingway writes only the surface narrative, allowing the reader to infer the significant portion that is omitted. His writing is both economical and understated. Not everything can be assessed by appearance; just as an iceberg cannot be evaluated solely by the small visible tip that protrudes above the water.

Let us consider the opening scene of Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*: "He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish." [11] This represents the tip of the story that is told, the visible part. As for the real part, which lies beneath the surface, it is as follows: "This fisherman is very old, very poor, and quite lonely. He is leading a very difficult life, with nothing to eat, nobody to help him in the bad luck that accompanied him for eighty-four days." The reader must delve into the core of the story to grasp this: "Nobody can accept such a fate. The old man should do something to change his fate." This serves as an example of "The Iceberg Theory" in action.

4.2. Main Features of Hemingway's "Iceberg Theory"

4.2.1. Functional Omission: The Tip of the Iceberg Versus the Bulk of It

Influenced by his journalistic career, Hemingway was convinced that omitting superfluous and extraneous material made writing more engaging. As he transitioned to short story writing, he maintained this minimalistic style, concentrating on surface elements without explicitly addressing the underlying themes. This duality, encompassing both surface elements and those that are submerged, will later be introduced to readers as "The Iceberg Theory" of fiction writing, where the tip of the iceberg represents the surface element, and the bulk of the iceberg pertains to the submerged element and the underlying themes of the story.

Throughout Hemingway's writing, one can glimpse his attitudes and views on society as well as the social issues of his time. Having lived through and participated in two world wars and various minor conflicts (civil wars), he developed a tough approach to life, a rough manner of living, and a bold style of expression. For Hemingway, masculinity was the only mode of expression left in the absence of the natural counterbalance of femininity, which had been sacrificed on the battlefields. This is the central theme of "The Iceberg Theory". Everything in Hemingway's world is masculine, cruel, and tough.

"The Iceberg Theory" is Ernest Hemingway's writing style. On one hand, it stems from his journalistic career, characterised by simple language, clarity of ideas and images, concision, and an economy of style. On the other hand, "The Iceberg Theory" also refers to the functional omission of superfluous elements, such as -ly adverbs, transitions, dialogue tags

(e.g., "..."), and background information. "The Iceberg Theory" embodies a minimalistic style that concentrates on two primary aspects: the surface story the writer conveys, which represents the tip of the iceberg, and the deeper meaning to which the writer alludes, the larger portion of the iceberg, symbolising the bulk of the iceberg [12].

Albert Camus, a disciple of Hemingway, incorporated Hemingway's style into his Existentialism and linked the "Iceberg Theory" of writing to the Absurd philosophy. In Camus's work, *L'Étranger*, for instance, the main protagonist's actions (Meursault's) represent the visible tip of the iceberg. In contrast, the invisible bulk of the iceberg is represented by Camus's writings on the absurd, alienation, and death, which provide pertinent insight into the origins of Meursault's emotional state [13].

Hemingway's "Iceberg Theory" of writing is what he is internationally respected and highly regarded for. His theory of fiction writing is rooted in the principles of descriptive omission and stylistic compression. It allows the reader to see only the tip of the iceberg (events, description, dialogue), while the remaining seven-eighths of its mass (the dramatic feelings) remain submerged. In practice, this means that Hemingway omits inner monologue, stream of consciousness, and authorial commentary because he believes that description and dialogue are sufficient and that such writing, if well-crafted, provides the reader with a true sense of lived experience. In his description of this theory of writing, Hemingway states that a clever writer gives the impression that there is a topography down under the surface, where a character's feelings and state of mind reside [14].

"If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water" [15].

"The Iceberg Theory" is a stylistic theory that emphasises the economy of style through omission: parts of the story are hidden from the reader and revealed later in subsequent scenes. That is, only the top of the iceberg is visible in the northern part of the oceans; only the tip of the story is exposed, while the actual narrative remains underwater, untold and unrevealed, left for the reader to uncover if they wish to grasp the true meaning of the story. In this context, two types of omissions can be employed. The first type involves unnecessary scenes, paragraphs, sentences, or words. This kind of omission is more common in advanced stages of writing, as editors, reviewers, and rewriters often utilise it. The second type of omission is known as aesthetic omission or functional omission. It is used in the initial stages of writing and in the first drafts. It is not employed by editors or reviewers; rather, it is utilised by the writers themselves. Functional omission aims to capture the reader's attention, thus embodying the spirit of "the Iceberg Theory."

4.2.2. Simplicity

Ernest Hemingway's works encapsulate his views on the writing process. He is a renowned prose writer, occupying a unique position in literature. In his writings, he conveys a profoundly philosophical perspective on life, using simple language and straightforward sentence structures. Simplicity is a defining characteristic of Hemingway's writing style. Three distinct types of simplicity can be identified in his works: structural simplicity, which relies on monosyllabic words and short sentences without subordination or connections; semantic simplicity, which primarily avoids -ly adverbs and uses vocabulary accessible to third-grade children; and stylistic simplicity, which eschews complexity and ornamentation.

Hemingway worked as a journalist for the *Kansas City Star* in his early years, when he chose not to attend university. The style guide of this newspaper taught him to favour nouns and verbs over adjectives and adverbs. The nouns and verbs used do not require any modifiers. Adjectives and adverbs, in contrast, are often unnecessary and may lead to redundancy. Hemingway avoids using -ly adverbs, a choice that has helped him simplify his writing. He employs 25% fewer adverbs than the average amateur novel writer. [16] Adverbs are words used to describe an action (a verb), a state (a noun), or another adverb. Esteemed writers typically avoid using adverbs. Instead, they select words that encapsulate, by themselves, both reference and description. Hemingway is one such exemplary figure. This approach helps to prevent redundancy and awkward placement in the works of Ernest Hemingway.

Hemingway's tendency towards simplicity and clarity drove him to employ straightforward grammar. The primary structure of most of Hemingway's works is based either on the "subject+verb+object" pattern to convey information or on the "subject+verb+adjective" pattern to provide descriptions and details. Nevertheless, Hemingway's eye remains vigilant against any intrusion of compound words or adverbs, negative clauses or subordination, or overly long sentences.

To help the reader engage with the text fluently and draw them in, Hemingway employs short sentences to provide rhythm and punch. At times, he combines two or more "short" sentences using "and" to create a sense of panoramic sweep. Hemingway's long sentences are typically linked by "and." In other words, Hemingway's long sentences consist of short sentences joined together by "and" with monosyllabic or bisyllabic words. Consequently, he omits commas from compound sentences, contrary to classical punctuation rules, to cultivate a breathless feel. Ernest Hemingway recognised that not every sentence should be short, nor should every sentence be lengthy.

Hemingway's quest for spontaneity and simplicity led him to favour words that are simpler and have Germanic roots. Latin words in his texts are quite rare, as he tends to prefer monosyllabic words that are abundant in Germanic vocabulary. It is worth noting that short, common words often go unnoticed during reading, unlike longer ones that may occa-

sionally require consulting dictionaries. Let us consider the first and most famous example ever, the opening scene of *A Farewell to Arms* with 4 sentences, 126 words, and 103 monosyllabic words:

"In the late summer of that year, we lived in a house in a village overlooking the river and the plain, leading to the mountains. The riverbed was strewn with pebbles and boulders, dry and white under the sun, while the water flowed clearly and swiftly, taking on a blue hue in the channels. Troops passed by the house and along the road, raising a cloud of dust that settled on the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees were dusty too, and the leaves fell early that year. We observed the troops marching down the road, the dust rising, and the leaves, stirred by the breeze, falling as the soldiers marched. Afterwards, the road lay bare and white, save for the scattered leaves." [17]

Here and elsewhere, the vocabulary used relies on monosyllabic words that are widely understood and is supported by straightforward, everyday language. In other words, Hemingway utilises accessible vocabulary. His aim is quite clear: he targets readers of all ages, from infants to the elderly, thus making the reception of his novels much simpler for the subconscious mind. Now, let us consider the following Hemingway sentence:

"He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream, and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish".

In this opening scene of "The Old Man and the Sea", Ernest Hemingway employs 27 words, of which 24 are monosyllabic and only three are bisyllabic. This choice allows Hemingway's writing to appeal to children and toddlers, as well as young people and the elderly, engaging a much wider audience. Simple language can simultaneously attract a broader readership and make the literary content more accessible.

There is a tool called the Flesch-Kincaid score, which is available in Microsoft Word. This tool measures the readability of a text. The shorter the text is, in terms of sentences and words, the lower the readability score tends to be. This tool calculates the average sentence length along with the total number of syllables per word to assess the simplicity of a text. Thus, the shorter the sentences and words, the lower the readability score. A score of 4 (four) or 3 (three) indicates that the text is well understood by readers in the fourth and third grades, meaning it is suitable for pupils aged eight and nine, third and fourth graders. "The Old Man and the Sea" scores 3.9, "The Sun Also Rises" scores 4.2...[18].

Hemingway never uses more complex words when simpler ones are available, nor does he employ archaic terms when everyday language will suffice. Thus, instead of using the verb "to coexist", he would choose "to live together", and instead of using the adjective "extraordinary", he would opt for "strange" or "wonderful".

Hemingway's style, when scrutinised and epitomised, reveals itself to be simple, unadorned, straightforward, clear, and vigorous. In this way, Hemingway brought the English

language down to the level of everyday life, opposing the outdated literary traditions that once flaunted an aristocratic style, manner, and vocabulary to nineteenth-century readers. Simplicity in Ernest Hemingway's works is evident through his choice of uncomplicated storylines, direct language, and concise style, characterised by monosyllabic words and short sentences.

4.2.3. Positivism

Hemingway's writing style is celebrated for its affirmative sentences, straightforward structures, precise wording, and positive vocabulary. He refrains from using negative sentences as they impede fluent reading. More often than not, the modes and forms of his sentences are affirmative. Likewise, the meaning of his wording is consistently positive on both syntactic and semantic levels.

Hemingway avoids using negative sentences and instead opts for sentences in negative form. The following sentence, "He is not a straightforward gentleman," consists of ten syllables. Hemingway would rewrite it in the affirmative as follows: "He is a cheater" with only five syllables. Likewise, the sentence "He is not a straightforward gentleman" sounds the same as "He is a straightforward gentleman" even though "Not" is both used and heard in the first sentence; this occurs because the subconscious mind perceives the phrase without "Not", the negative tool that is expected to change affirmation into negation. Therefore, Hemingway employs positive sentences, as affirmation is the instinctive and natural language of the subconscious mind.

It is evident that Hemingway contented himself with positive and affirmative sentences. However, he goes far beyond affirmative modes and forms by opting for positive, straightforward words rather than negative, indirect ones. Consequently, when faced with two choices, Hemingway tends to select the positive one. Consider the following sentences: instead of "Our dishes are fat-free", he would use "Our dishes are healthy"; instead of "She cannot resist buying ice creams", he would use "She loves ice cream the way babies do"; instead of saying "I stood motionless at hearing the news", he would express it as "I felt paralysed at hearing the news."

4.3. Hemingway's Style and Gender Identity

Having witnessed the horrors of the two world wars and the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War, Ernest Hemingway developed a tough attitude towards life in the post-war era. He perceives it as a life devoid of anima, an exclusively masculine existence. This image is reflected in all of Hemingway's works across various dimensions: themes, settings, characterisation, language, dialogue, and style.

As far as style is concerned, Hemingway adopts a *paratactic style*, which is more *masculine* and assertive, unlike the *hypotactic style*, which is more *feminine* and *academic*. [19] Let us compare these two patterns: *Hypotaxis*, as in the following example, "Since you are a writer, changing the world

5.2. At the Level of Syntax

Syntactic simplicity in Hemingway's original works is expected to be reflected in their translations. Therefore, regarding the use of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, translators of Hemingway's works are encouraged to adhere to the original author's choices: a preference for nouns and verbs over adjectives and adverbs, with a particular avoidance of -ly adverbs. Instead, words that inherently reference and describe are favoured.

Hemingway's sentences are often short. Even when they seem long, they are actually brief sentences connected by "and." Translators are expected to follow this rule. Hemingway's sentences typically use straightforward grammar: the "subject +verb +object" pattern for presenting information or the "subject +verb +adjective" pattern to offer descriptions and details.

Translators who struggle with punctuation can omit all the punctuation marks they are used to, except for the full stop (.) and question mark (?), as Ernest Hemingway does not pay much attention to punctuation.

5.3. At the Level of Semantics

Spontaneity and simplicity are not choices confined to Hemingway's syntax but extend to every linguistic domain of expression, including stylistics and semantics. From a semantic standpoint, Hemingway employs very simple, everyday words. However, simplicity alone is insufficient to convey his words as they appear in his original texts; positivism remains essential. Positive sentences, forms, wording, and vocabulary are greatly anticipated in the translations of Hemingway's texts. Moreover, the modes and structures of Hemingway's sentences are expected to adhere to the affirmative, avoiding any negative constructions.

5.4. At the Level of Stylistics

Hemingway is a staunch defender of masculinity, often at the expense of femininity. In doing so, he suggests that the two world wars disrupted the natural balance between genders. Throughout his works, women are rarely represented, while masculinity and toughness are ever-present in his narratives.

Hemingway's works encompass themes, settings, characterisation, language, dialogue, and style. His prose is crafted to be read and appreciated for its masculine quality. Translators of his works should recognise this stylistic choice and convey it effectively to the target readership in the target language.

6. Hemingway Translated: Arabic Translations as Samples

The works of the American novelist Ernest Hemingway have always attracted the attention of Arab translators. His

famous novel *The Old Man and the Sea* has been translated into Arabic thirty-four times. The first one was Munir Baalabaki in 1954, and the last one was Hamada Rajab in 2020. Here is the comprehensive list of all the Arabic versions of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*:

Munir Baalabaki's (Beirut: Dar Al-Ilm Lilmalayine, first edition, 1954), Saleh Jawdat's (Cairo: Al-Dar Al-Qawmiya Littibaa Wannashr, 1962), Adnan Al-Mallouhi's (Damascus: Dar Osama littibaa Wannashr Wattawzie, 1998), anonymous translation (Beirut: Dar Albahhar, 1999), Fadel Habib Mohsen's (Beirut: Al-Maktaba Al-Haditha littibaa Wannashr, Collection of Kounouz Rawae Alqassas Al'alamiya, first edition, 2000), Samir Ezzat Nassar's (Amman: Al-Ahlia Littibaa Wattawzie, 2002), Elie Muhanna's (Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr Al'arabi Littibaa Wannashr, first edition, 2003), anonymous translation (Amman: Dar Oussama, 2006), Abdelhamid Zahid's (Marrakesh: no publisher, first edition, 2007), anonymous translation (Cairo: Maktabat Alnafidha Littibaa Wattawzie, 2007), Ali Al-Qasimi's (Casablanca: Mansurat Azzaman, first edition, 2008), anonymous translation (Damascus: Dar Al-Hafiz Littibaa Wal'intaj Wannashr Wattawzie, Collection of Riwayat Aladab Al'alami, first edition, 2008), Faiq Ali's (Damascus: Dar Samarkand Linnashr Wattibaa Wattawzie, first edition, 2009), Gabriel Wahba's (Cairo: Ad-Dar Almasriya-Alloubnaniya, 2009), Samar Samrani's (Aleppo: Shuaa Linnashr Wa Al'ouloum, 2009), anonymous translation (Amman: Dar Al-Walid Linnashr Wattawzie, first edition, 2009), anonymous translation (Algeria: Kunoz Linnashr Wattawzie, first edition, 2010), anonymous translation (Damascus/Cairo: Dar Alkitab Al'arabi Linnashr, first edition, 2012), anonymous translation (Cairo: Ad-Dar Al-Masriya Lil'ouloum, 2015), Mahmoud Hosni's (Kuwait: Maktabat Afaq Linnashr Wattibaa Wattawzie, 2016), anonymous translation (Riyadh: Dar Hakaya Linnashr Wattawzie, first edition, 2016), Ali Kheder's (Beirut: Dar Al-Rafidain Wattibaa Wannashr Wattawzie, first edition, 2017), anonymous translation (Beirut: Dar Alhikayat Littibaa Wannashr, first edition, 2017), anonymous translation (Amman: Dar Khattab Linnashr Wattawzie, first edition, 2017), anonymous translation (Amman: Dar Alam Althaqafa Linnashr Wattawzie, 2017), Abdallah Adwan's (Cairo: Dar Pharos Linnashr Wattibaa Wattawzie, 2018), Fatima Taher's (Cairo: Dar Al-Maaref, first edition, 2019), anonymous translation (Damascus: Dar Altanawwue Althaqafi, first edition, 2019), anonymous translation (Cairo: Dar Al-Alf Kitab Linnashr Wattawzie, 2019), Hamada Rajab's (Batna (Algeria): Al-Muthaqaf Linnashr Wattawzie, first edition, 2020), 'Atef 'Amara's (Cairo: Al-Maktab Al-Arabi Lilmaaref, no date), Lana Abu Musleh's (Beirut: Collection of Qissas Aalamiya Liljamie, no date), Ziad Zakaria's (Beirut: Dar Alsharq Al'arabi, no date), and Ahmed Muhammad Hayder's (Beirut: Al-Maktaba Al'ilmiya Aljadida, no date).

[21]

The first Arabic translations of Hemingway's novel were released in the 1950s and 1960s, during the twentieth century, in numerous editions by high-calibre translators, who have since formed the two poles of translation related to *The Old Man and the Sea*. The first pole is Munir Baalabaki, the Godfather of Arab translators and literal translation. The second pole is the Egyptian poet Saleh Jawdat, the pioneer of free translation. These two translations have prevailed for more than half a century without significant competition. The initial translation of the novel was published two years after its original release. In 1954, Munir Baalabaki translated the novel, the same year the book received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

If the fifties witnessed the absolute dominance of Munir Baalabaki's translation, the sixties ushered in the first free translation of Hemingway's novel by Saleh Jawdat, who sought to differentiate his work from Munir Baalabaki's translation in terms of strategy. However, his pursuit of uniqueness led him to contradict Munir Baalabaki's title, *al-Shaykh wa-al-Baḥr*, and even to conflict with the Arabic language itself by selecting *al-Ajuz wa-al-Bahr* as the title for his translation. Saleh Jawdat's initial translation was published by the National Publishing House in 1962, while the second edition was released by Dar Al-Hilal two years prior to Saleh Jawdat's death in 1974.

Starting from the late 1990s of the twentieth century, an unprecedented interest emerged in translating Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* into Arabic. Firstly, these were renditions intended to be familiar with the pioneers' earlier translations. Secondly, they were expected to offer translational alternatives that embody a specific approach. Thirdly, they aimed to rectify previous lapses; fourthly, they were to be undertaken by qualified translators.

A thorough examination of the thirty-four Arabic translations revealed that they were of low quality. They encountered significant challenges in grappling with Hemingway's writing philosophy, narrative style, and word choice, among other factors. The reasons behind these shortcomings may sometimes have arisen from an implicit drive for commercial gain, compliance with a request from a publishing company, or even from a personal desire to establish oneself as a translator. Only one, Ali al-Qasimi's translation of "The Old Man and the Sea," stood out as a remarkable rendition, providing an excellent model for future generations of Arab translators aspiring to translate Ernest Hemingway's other works.

Ali Al-Qasimi was the only translator among the five Arab translators who distinguished the Virgin in the text from the rest of the virgins in the Christian context as the Virgin of Cobre. He is also considered the most proficient translator out of the thirty-four who has overcome the traps of segmentation, untranslation, misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and thus mistranslation. The sentences and paragraphs of his translation, in terms of segmentation, were exceptionally equivalent to the sentences and paragraphs of the original. Additionally, his overtly erroneous errors, which were characterised by the

misuse of punctuation marks and other simple syntactic errors, do not indicate functional differences in any dimension of the situational context. Being originally a novelist and a short story writer and, above all, a fan of Hemingway.

7. Conclusion

Ernest Hemingway's distinctive literary style—marked by simplicity, omission, and a deliberate avoidance of superfluous ornamentation—presents both opportunities and challenges for translation. As this study has demonstrated, his "Iceberg Theory" revolutionises fiction writing through functional omission, structural economy, and a preference for direct, affirmative language. These stylistic choices, deeply rooted in Hemingway's philosophy of positivism and masculine identity, create a unique narrative voice that resonates across cultures while resisting full translation into other languages.

The analysis of Arabic translations of *The Old Man and the Sea*, with its thirty-four different renditions, reveals the tension between Hemingway's translatability and untranslatability. While his minimalist syntax and everyday vocabulary may appear adaptable, the cultural and stylistic nuances embedded in his prose (e.g., gendered language, rhythmic brevity, and implied subtext) often necessitate creative compromises from translators. The sheer volume of Arabic re-translations underscores both the enduring appeal of Hemingway's work and the inherent difficulties in capturing his "iceberg" effect, where the unsaid carries as much weight as the said.

Ultimately, Hemingway's style transcends linguistic boundaries due to its thematic universality, yet it remains tethered to the idiosyncrasies of English in its execution. Future research could explore how digital tools or adaptive translation strategies might bridge these gaps, preserving Hemingway's voice while accommodating the expressive limits of target languages. His legacy, however, endures as a testament to the power of style, not merely as a vehicle for storytelling, but as the story itself.

On July 2, 1961, Hemingway shot himself dead, yet questions about his legacy still resonate. One of these legacies is Hemingway's style, which has shaped the history of creative writing, not only in the twentieth century but for all time. Hemingway revolutionised the stylistics of fiction, and any indifference to his contribution to literature will diminish his unparalleled talent. Consequently, translating Hemingway's works presents a significant challenge for translators. The translation of his words and worlds poses a substantial obstacle that translators are expected to confront, tackle, and overcome.

Author Contributions

Mohamed Sa'īd Raḥmānī is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Appendix

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Works in English

Magically Yours! (Short Stories), 2023.

Translation Quality Assessment of the Arabic Versions of English Literature, 2025.

Translatable, Untranslatable, 2025.

Back to Innocence (Short Stories), in preparation.

The Three Keys (An Anthology of Moroccan New Short Story), in preparation.

Short Story Collections in Arabic

Waiting for the Morning (Short Stories), 2003.

Season of Migration to Anywhere (Short Stories), 2006.

Death of the Author (Short Stories), 2010.

A Dialogue between Two Generations (Short Stories) in 2011 (A collection of short stories co-authored with Moroccan short-story writer Driss Seghir).

Behind Every Great Man, There Are Dwarfs (Short Stories), 2012.

No to Violence (Short Stories), 2014.

Flash Fiction in Arabic

Fifty Short-Shorts: Theme of Freedom (Flash Fiction), 2014.

Fifty Short-Shorts: Theme of Dream (Flash Fiction), 2024.

Fifty Short-Shorts: Theme of Love (Flash Fiction), 2025.

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The Star of Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan (A Trilogy), in preparation.

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